

UK research shows dangerously high levels of salt in kids' meals

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Children's meals at some of the UK's leading pub and fast food chains contain more than a child's recommended daily salt allowance, research from Queen Mary, University of London has shown.

The recommended child's [salt](#) Guidelines Daily Amount (GDA) is 4g and the survey from the Consensus Action on Salt and Health (CASH), based at Queen Mary, uncovered five meals which topped the GDA:

- Nando's: Nandino's veggie burger with creamy mash – 5.3g salt
- Wetherspoons: Wiltshire cured ham and cheese sandwich served with chips - 4.8g salt

- Harvester: Gammon and chicken combo with mashed potato and beans – 4.3g salt
- Sizzling Pub Co: 4oz gammon with mash and beans – 4.1g salt*
- Wetherspoons – chicken breast nuggets with chips and baked beans – 4.0g salt

“Children’s meals should provide tasty and healthy alternatives to more adult dishes,” says Katharine Jenner, Campaign Director of CASH.

“It is an outrage that when families go out for a pub lunch, they may be unknowingly putting their children’s health at risk.”

The survey showed there were considerable variations in the salt levels between restaurants as well as between meals from the same restaurant.

Wetherspoons offer a ham and cheese sandwich with chips, containing 4.8g of salt whilst also offering spaghetti bolognese, containing the lowest amount of salt found in the survey - 0.1g.

Sizzling Pub Co. offers a gammon with mash and beans containing 4.1g of salt and also has a chicken breast with a jacket potato boat and peas meal with just a quarter of the salt, 0.8g.

The five main children’s meals, including side dishes, containing the lowest amount of salt found in the survey were:

- Wetherspoons: Annabel Karmel spaghetti bolognese - 0.1g salt
- McDonalds: Four-piece chicken nuggets and fruit bag - 0.4g salt
- Wimpy: Fish bites with salad - 0.5g salt
- Hungry Horse: Four cod fish fingers and jacket potato with peas/corn/salad - 0.73g salt
- KFC: Kids popcorn chicken with corn cobette - 0.78g salt

The survey found side dishes also were an extra hidden source of salt, with a mash or spicy rice from Nando's containing 1.8g - nearly twice as much salt as a main dish of Nandinos chicken breast fillet strips at 0.8g.

Mash and beans were typically found to be the highest salt combination and a jacket potato, vegetables or salad the lowest. At Sizzling Pub Co, mash and beans contains 1.4g salt, seven times more than a jacket potato with peas (0.2g). Although all outlets offered a vegetable side option, just four included vegetables as part of all [meals](#).

Desserts were also found to be a hidden salt source with five desserts found to contain the same or more salt as a packet of crisps; for instance an ice cream with chocolate sauce from Sizzling Pub Co contains 0.7g salt per portion (18% GDA).

“Salt addiction starts in childhood and can lead to serious health issues in later life including high blood pressure, increased risk of stroke, heart disease, osteoporosis and kidney disease,” says Professor Graham MacGregor, Chairman of CASH based at the Wolfson Institute of Preventive Medicine.

“Parents are doing their best, but with the food industry continuing to put huge levels of salt in our food without any information on the menu, our children remain at risk.”

Nutritionist Hannah Brinsden suggests some tips for healthier choices for children:

- Consider carefully the side order, e.g. replace mash with jacket potato, or replace baked beans with a salad or vegetable side
- Consider ordering a smaller portion of one of the adult options for a child
- Try not to add further salt at the table

- Remember that foods like bacon and cheese are high in salt

More information: For more information on making low salt choices go to www.actiononsalt.org.uk

Provided by Queen Mary University of London

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